

## University of Dundee

### Frankenstein's Poetic Progeny

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# FRANKENSTEIN'S POETIC PROGENY: ACTIVITY BOOK FOR SCHOOLS

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

WYVERN POETS

# FRANKENSTEIN'S POETIC PROGENY & WYVERN POETS PROUDLY INTRODUCE:

## ACTIVITY BOOK FOR SCHOOLS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE BEING HUMAN FESTIVAL  
OF THE HUMANITIES AND THE CENTRE FOR CRITICAL  
AND CREATIVE CULTURES (4C) AT THE UNIVERSITY  
OF DUNDEE

WITH GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO THE BEING HUMAN FESTIVAL ORGANISERS;  
ALSO ROY CANNING, LAUREN CHRISTIE, DANIEL COOK, REBECCA HORNER, CAM KEN-  
NEDY, CHRIS MURRAY, NORRIE MILLAR, STEVE SMART, PHIL VAUGHAN, WYVERN POETS  
AND FAYE WILLIAMS



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## INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

### FRANKENSTEIN RETURNS: A MONSTER COMEBACK IN DUNDEE

This exclusive workbook for schools is a specially designed extension of 'Frankenstein's Poetic Progeny', a unique collection of poetry from Dundee's Wyvern Poets group as part of the nationwide 'Being Human' Festival. In order to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and considering Shelley's young age when she created the novel, I am delighted to introduce a free workbook full of activities that celebrate literacy, the Gothic genre and creativity. Each activity has been designed around different subjects in order to compliment the Curriculum for Excellence. This workbook has been made available to all schools via PDF format in order to encourage maximum participation without necessitating extra printing costs. As this project is an extension of my doctoral research, I would be grateful for feedback on these activities via the attached form. I hope you enjoy the combination of inspirational work from Dundee's Wyvern Poets, the underpinning theme of *Frankenstein* and the variety of creative activities.

Lauren Christie  
University of Dundee

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* celebrates its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, but 2018 is also the year of its rightful homecoming back to Dundee. At the end of her preface to a new edition in 1831, Mary Shelley wrote, 'once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper'. The verses in this collection by Dundee's Wyvern Poets group testify to just how her 'hideous progeny' continues to prosper by taking new forms; they show her creation is still electrifyingly alive (or should that be 'undead?') as well as kicking topical two centuries later.

This collection is also part of the UK's 2018 national festival of the Arts and Humanities, 'Being Human' (15-24 November). The University of Dundee is Being Human's Scottish hub for the third year running. This year Dundee's programme is, appropriately, 'Frankenstein Returns'. Mary Shelley's visionary novel is Science Fiction's Gothic Ur-text. SF has a grandmother, rather than grandfather, who imagined the terrible future costs of divorcing a new thing called 'science' from considerations of gender, emotional intelligence and social responsibility. The University is celebrating *Frankenstein's* links with Dundee, where its imaginative foundations were laid while teenage Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (as she then was) stayed between 1812 and 1814. She was deeply affected by her experiences in a Romantically-situated Scottish burgh, undergoing disruptive industrialisation and a ferment of revolutionary ideas; also by Dundee's proximity to the Arctic as whaling port and shipyard for ice-breakers. Similarly, when Mary Ann Baxter endowed 'University College, Dundee' in 1881, she was effectively enacting the democratic and egalitarian vision of Mary Shelley's mother and father: feminist pioneer Mary Wollstonecraft and radical philosopher William Godwin. Baxter intended a gender-blind and intellectually-balanced institution, promoting 'the education of persons of both sexes and the study of Science, Literature, and the Fine Arts' (founding Deed quoted on University of Dundee website: <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/50/podcasts/philanthropy/>).

Dundee's 'Frankenstein Returns' programme has the following partners: Leisure and Culture (Dundee Central Library), DCA, Dundee Science Centre, Dundee Comics Creative Space, Playing Small Parts (a local theatre company). It is also linked into events celebrating the novel across Europe and North America and (for the first time) includes a specially-illustrated Dundee edition of the text. This programme, with free events and activities all over the city, is seizing the opportunity to raise Dundee's cultural profile and make its profound connections with one of the landmark texts of World Literature as widely and permanently visible as possible. To find out more about the programme go to: <https://beinghumanfestival.org/organiser/university-of-dundee/>

**Fran Baillie's** version of the creature ponders the motives of the mind which created, then abandoned him – absent father = delinquent son? She asks us to consider which of them is more or less monstrous.

**Bet McCallum** spots the creature still living on in the Arctic wastes, only to become a personification of our threat to their survival through pollution and global warming – another monstrous outcome of humanity's unchecked technological expansionism.

**Roy Canning** introduces a darkly comic note by imagining the 'Bride of Frankenstein's' response to his Tinder profile, emphasising her right to choose.

**Ann Prescott** presents a double-vision from the Baxter family cottage on South Baffin Street: of the Dundee of Mary's time and what can be seen now, comparing past with present in alternate lines.

Frankenstein is hauled before a modern scientific ethics committee by **Gavin Cameron** and wittily made to acknowledge his 'paternal' responsibilities.

**George Robertson** patches the creature back together in the metaphorical form of the University's current relationship with Dundee's divergent socio-economic geography.

Mary Shelley's ghoulish scenario of posthumous existence is topically recast by **Anita Petrie** in the more benign context of today's organ donation and transplant surgery.

**Roddie McKenzie** reworks her idea of artificial life and its consequences through the effects of AI and the potential redundancy of the merely human work force.

Finally, **Steve Smart** writes about the latest mutations of Frankenstein's bid to overcome death: as cryogenic thaw-outs in remote futures or even the digital uploading of consciousness into man-made heavens.

We hope that this collection will similarly spark you into remaking Mary Shelley's creation yourself. I am certainly inspired to have a go and here are the first stirrings:



## *Frankenstein's Nursery Chryme*

Mary, Mary, Gothic and contrary  
How will your brainchild grow?  
Dark electric arts  
through body parts  
with jagged stitches  
all in a row-oh-oh  
with jagged stitches  
all in a row.

*Keith Williams*  
*university of Dundee*  
*21/11/18*

## INTRODUCTION FOR PUPILS

### MONSTROUS LEGACIES

Two hundred years ago, a monstrous nightmare was crafted into one of the most influential Gothic novels ever written. Mary Shelley was only eighteen years old when she created *Frankenstein*, one stormy night at the Villa Diodati. This year we are celebrating 200 years of this classic and what better way to do so than by making our own monsters? As a young girl, and after the death of her mother, Mary was sent by her father, William Godwin up to Dundee in Scotland to stay with the Baxter family. At such a young age this trip would have been a monumental journey. Considering scenes she would have witnessed such as the gruesome whaling industry by the docks in Dundee, and the dense fog of the grey river Tay, the novel has clearly been influenced by this trip. In the 21st Century references to *Frankenstein* and Victor's creature exist everywhere in popular culture. I invite you all to dive into the monstrous depths of this workbook and have fun celebrating and crafting your own wondrous creations!

*Lauren Christie*

*University of Dundee*



## *Frankenstein's Poème*

Did you know that when Victor Frankenstein created his monstrous progeny, the native language of the creature was French? Drawing inspiration from Frankenstein's Nursery Chryme, in the space below create your own short nursery rhyme. This can be on anything that you feel is particularly Gothic, or fits in well with our Franken-theme. Once you have created this nursery rhyme, so that the creature can understand the words have a go at translating it into French.

## *The Monster Rants*

What monstrous mind designed me and why?  
What have I done to deserve to be this hideous brainchild?  
Who and what am I?

Limping through the world I abhor myself, this horror,  
this ghoul, this crusted carapace, this sulph'rous fiend  
who wears a stolen smile, this base growl,  
this hulk devoid of beauty, drowning in confusion,  
my dermis a filigree of waxy scars  
patchworked, diseased. I look out through whose scarred eyes?  
Do they distort perception? Do they lie?

What monster designed me, consigned me to this  
friendless Purgatory? Who could love me, this alien,  
a tangle of mangled mosaic?

Fragmented sounds escape this jigsaw of despair, of desperation.  
I reek of death, a hellish tapestry. I shudder at what the mirror shows.  
What have I done to deserve this nothingness?  
I lurk like Satan, an outcast, a sacrilegious sinner.  
I am without sin, without blame, yet suffer unjust torment  
Whose thoughts are these which infiltrate my unnatural brain?

What monstrous mind designed me and why?  
What has his ego done to concoct, to preserve, to conserve such a beast?  
He too is a monster.

*Fran Baillie*

## *Monster Vs. Creature: A Lesson in Characterisation*

In Baillie's poem note the detail and description, the visual imagery, similes and metaphors and personification that all contribute to such a clear and visual outline of the creature. Your task? In the space below, create your own creature. Consider the detail and style of Baillie's writing. Ways in which her description and narrative voice humanises the creature and evokes empathy. Perhaps you want to have a go at creating a bride for Victor Frankenstein's creature? Or a pet? Maybe even a mortal enemy, a second creation or a neighbour. The possibilities are endless.

*'He sprung from the cabin window... upon an ice raft that lay close to the vessel and pushing himself off he was carried away by the waves and I soon lost sight of him ...'*

*(Mary Shelley)*

### ***Rothera Research Station, Antarctica, 2018***

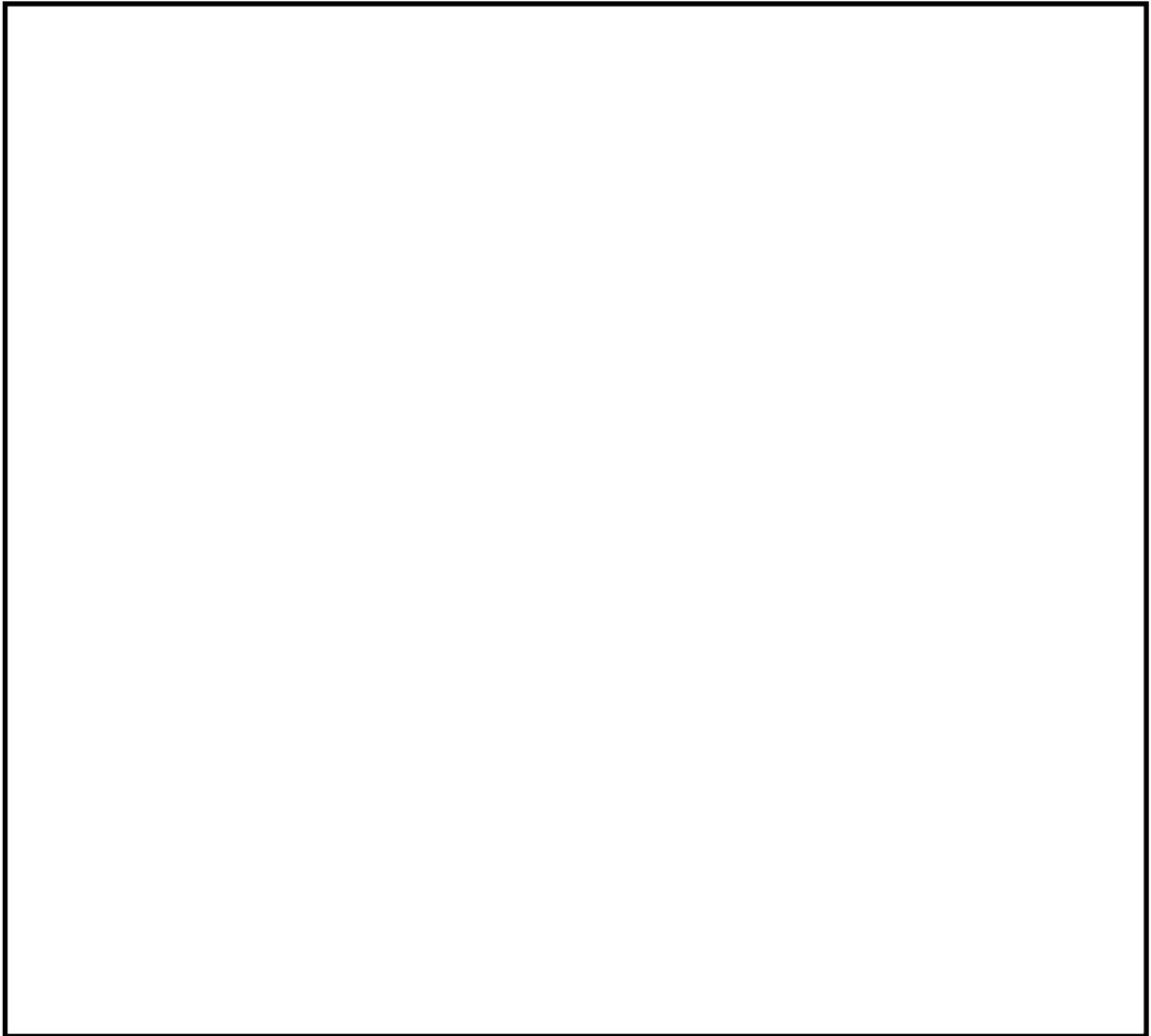
Ms Miller sees it again today  
Something on the web cam  
in a smirr of marine snow  
Some thing swimming with the fur seal  
with the fin whale  
Some thing feeding on the krill  
Something cybernetic  
and almost human

Later, on the floe, the monster basks  
in clean air on clean ice  
in the last great wilderness  
Ms Miller doubts the being will survive -  
ice shelves are already lost  
glaciers are retreating fast  
oceans acidify, creatures die and  
this one's cold bionic eye reflects the ozone hole.

***Bet McCallum***

## *Post-Apocalyptic News Flash!*

Concerns about the world we live in and global warming are becoming more relevant and urgent every day. We want you to research a global concern that you feel particularly passionate about. This could be global pollution, plastics in our oceans, the endangerment of certain animals or melting polar ice caps. From this, create a post-apocalyptic news heading and front page. In a futuristic world, your chosen research topic is the reason the world has ended. In this article you should consider how and why the global concern escalated to a point of obliterating civilisation. What are the after effects on the environment that is left on the planet? Is the air toxic? Did any humans survive, or has the end of civilisation spawned the dawn of a new era of inhabitants on this new and polluted earth? Build on everything you learned about characterisation and description from the previous exercise and be sure to include plenty of detail for your article.



*'Shall each man... find a wife for his bosom... and I be alone'*

*(Mary Shelley)*

## *Soulless Mates*

He is cute for a monster  
sensitive as a razor blade  
lofty with matching eyes  
has an interest in electricity  
admires Titans who fashion  
humans out of clay.

Would like to meet someone  
quirky, with translucent  
yellowish skin, a visceral  
tongue and foetid gums  
a little bit of dread will help,  
swipe to the right if you like.

We talked about morality  
skiing in the alps, the charm  
of a good swamp, he looked  
like the very poetry of nature  
like the archetypal gothic man  
I gave him six out of ten.

*Roy Canning*

## *Flatmate Wanted*

You are the creature. You have been abandoned by your creator and are now lost and alone in the world. You need somewhere to live- right? Create your own advert for a flatmate and a place to live that will go into a local paper. Thinking about detail, and about the creature and any particular quirks you may have, what would your ideal house/building/interior look like? Are you looking for a cave in a swamp or a high rise building in the city? How would you describe yourself and your qualities/hobbies? What are you looking for in a flatmate?



*The Cottage faced the river west of the commemorative  
plaque at the top of South Baffin Street, Dundee*

## *The Cottage*

Over the railway, the souls of oil rigs stalk  
*the blank and dreary northern shores of the Tay*  
Amid self-seeded wilderness, birds flit  
*beneath the trees in the grounds belonging to our house*  
Close-packed and cheerless, ranks of housing scale  
*the bleak sides of woodless mountains near*  
All around the debris of dead industry spurs  
*true compositions of airy flights of imagination.*  
Past lives, past hopes and aspirations  
*people the hours with creatures interesting to me.*  
Could I conceive the radicalisation of a freak?  
*My life appears too commonplace an affair*

*Ann Prescott*

## *Pre-Surgery Matters*

You are Victor Frankenstein and at the end of this workbook you will need to assemble your own creature. Use the wordsearch on the next page to gather all of your materials as detailed in the list below in preparation for the big surgery.

BOLTS

EARS

ELECTRICITY

EYEBALLS

FEET

HAIR

HANDS

HEAD

HEART

LEGS

LIGHTNING

MOUTH

NOSE

TORSO

E L P K J H L P L S F E W Q R  
Y S O B E N M I T W J W M R R  
S Y O A F N E L G A V H U M S  
K D R N E S O G D H B C F X C  
D T N O E B R O V U T H W J X  
E E B A T Q U U Q Y B N S Y C  
W Y T R H L P F F Y G J I R A  
V E N V X D E U Q W H K R N E  
F B H E A D F G V I K H H D G  
E A X Y Y R R X S J R T B V V  
Z L O S R O T L X Y R U M Y V  
E L E C T R I C I T Y O Q H E  
J S G M M X K R B E X M A Q G  
P Q S R A E M M S M Y I N M Q  
G N D V M X C C H N R C P R L

## *The Hearing*

In your defence,  
you say such experimentation  
was common in the eighteen-hundreds.

Perhaps you haven't noticed,  
but this  
is the twenty-first century.

Your licence to practice medicine  
is hereby revoked.  
Hearing is adjourned.

And kindly take your...  
creature with you,  
*Mister* Frankenstein.

*Gavin Cameron*

## *A Day in the Life of...*

All Frankenstein's creature wants is to be accepted for who he is. He did not ask to be created. In the space below pick your favourite Gothic monster or creature and create a day in the life of them. For example: Dracula as a dentist, Frankenstein's creature as a tailor or a werewolf as a vet.

## *The 200th Birthday of Frankenstein's Monster*

There is no-one alive today, who can say:  
I am two hundred years old and here to stay  
I reside in Bonnie Dundee, by the way,  
and it stands on the banks of the Silvery Tay.

I'm a modern marvel of biology,  
composite collection of anatomy,  
an ancient android, much of a mystery  
with bits being replaced come necessity.

I know how my body was put together  
without the help of a father and mother.  
I lecture at the School of Biometrics,  
where we get willed some deid geriatrics.

I've got arms from Ardler, legs from Linlathen,  
a head from the Hilltown, spleen from Strathmartine,  
a brain from Balgillo, heart from the Hacky,  
so over the years, I've been very lucky.`

I'm at the University of Dundee,  
where they're trying to make a rhymer of me,  
and if they succeed, then I do hope to be  
a makar of bodies and bawdy poesy.

Interchangeable parts have no prosthetics,  
with a body like mine, who needs robotics.

*George Robertson*

## *Song Lyrics*

In the above poem, consider the rhythm and flow of Robertson's words. Inspired by the musical quality of this poem, in the space below why not come up with your own Gothic inspired song lyrics? Don't worry, you don't need to sing them aloud to anyone. Once you have completed this you can share your work by reading aloud as you would a poem. Think X-Factor... but with monsters!



## *Spare Parts*

I'm dead.

But could there be a part of me that stays alive?

My donor card will give them carte blanche

On the grim reaper's harvest

My eyes perhaps

I think they use the cornea for the sight-impaired

Kidneys and liver

Whip them out quickly before they go off

My heart and lungs

No further use to me when breathless on the morticians slab

Feel free to take them. But do I have a say in who they go to?

An inhaler of asbestos rather than a 60 a day cavalier?

Probably not. And I won't care.

My ligaments and tendons

Use mine to graft on to a leg whose cruciate has snapped

So they can take up their bed and walk

A modern day miracle

My face!

Someone who looks a bit like me still walking around?

Ghoulish

Is this a form of life after death?

Spare part surgery, Mary.

200 years on

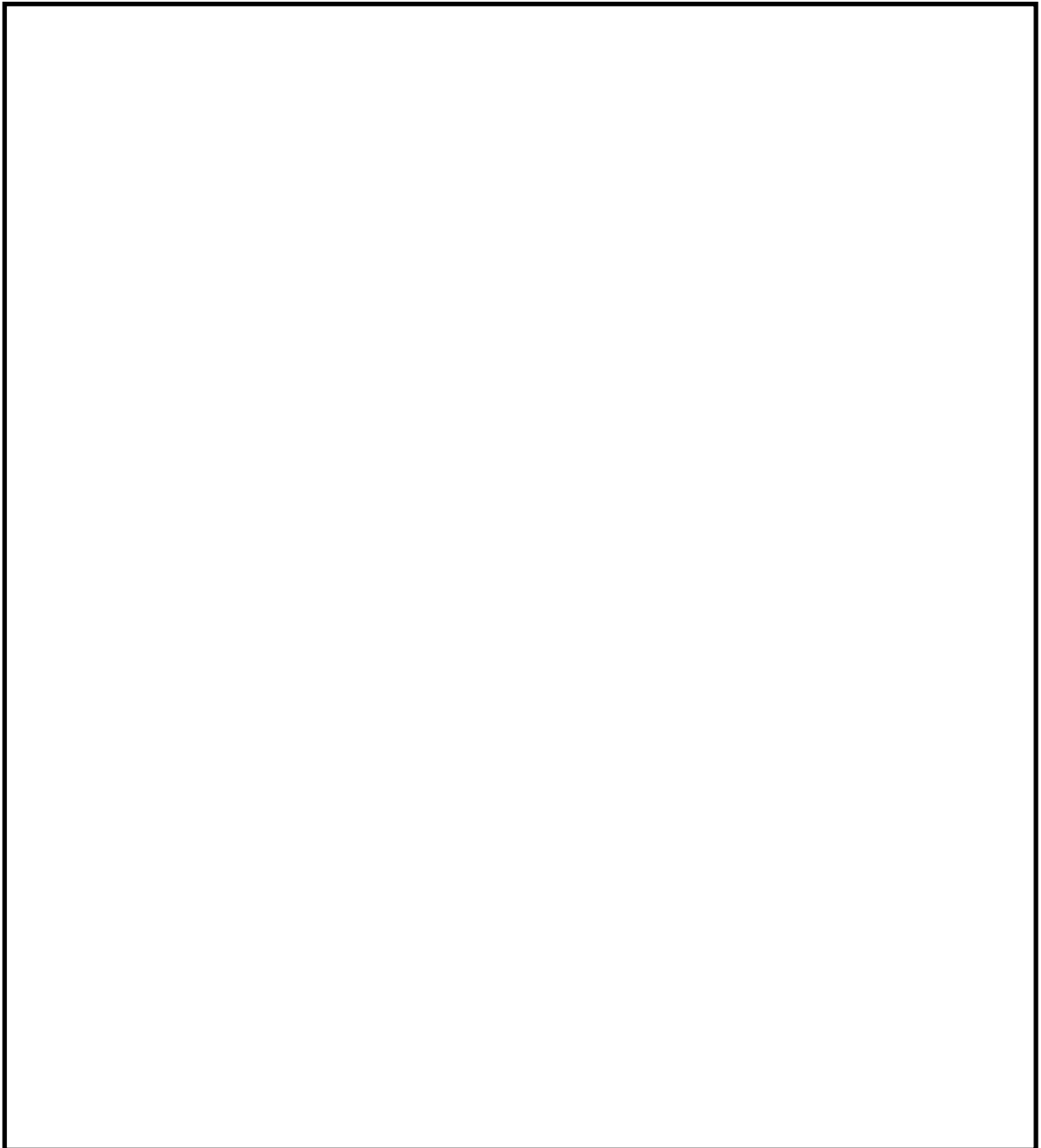
Today's Frankenstein can make a kinder cut

Did you ever imagine that?

*Anita Petrie*

## *A Lesson in Home Economics*

It is the day of the experiment! Did you manage to find all of the vital ingredients from the wordsearch? In the space below stitch together your own creature by drawing a selection of different body parts from different animals or creatures. Be sure to include all of the body parts that you found earlier and remember- the more bizarre and colourful the better.



*'It was on a dreary night of November  
that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils.'*

*(Mary Shelley)*

## *Unhuman Resources*

The transhuman Dr Frankenstein,  
founder of ANDROIDS-ARE-US,  
wasn't known to make a fiscal fuss,  
but despite the fecundity of Plant Synthetic (uterine)  
each pod percolating for cyborg growing.  
The down-staired monthly bar graph in his visor  
made him scorn his organiser,  
for falling sales of his humanoid fruit, all equipped with AI knowing.

A wittering of consultants looked on in dread.  
'My life's work-and another order revoked!  
Answers, or, I swear I'll wring your feckless throats.'

*'Give me the truth-are they not smart enough?' Well, all IQ targets were reached and records broken, we revolutionised their processing with the genetics chosen. 'So are they not team players, not durable? Not tough?'*

*Physical endurance is 400% of year twenty twenty five. We have made them co-operative and emotionally aware. They've unionised to protect their conditions and care; they are now what we might actually call...alive.*

*'So what about my business, you imposters?!'  
They claim rights, and pensions and are bolder,  
strangling our efforts to bring profits to shareholders.  
In this economy, they are monsters-they live too long, and prosper.*

*Roddie McKenzie*

## *Artificial Futures*

It is the end of the world. Artificial Intelligence and Posthuman creatures are taking over. Create a short poem or a Haiku from our new friendly (or unfriendly) leaders.

## *Transhuman™ [some assembly required]*

Six million dollars doesn't buy the dream team of once-upon-a-time,  
the future's DIY, blister packed, bubble wrapped, and shipped by UPS.

*... check the manifest of better-than-you-were-before;  
better, stronger, faster, custom body parts ...*

They say deluxe membership guarantees personality upload,  
your destiny securely backed-up in their eternal cloud.  
They just have to work out how to do it, and how,  
when, where and if, you might finally come back to life.

*... fix cryo-preserved head to brass neck collet  
with twin 15mm chromed boris-karloff bolts ...*

I wonder if bionic organs will harbour residual bodily charms,  
some gene squeezed vestigial glamour, post bio-hack-and-splice?  
Could you courie in to perfect bliss, a bench-grown better embrace,  
cosily snuggle up to a pale cyborg, un-sun-kissed but so sublime?

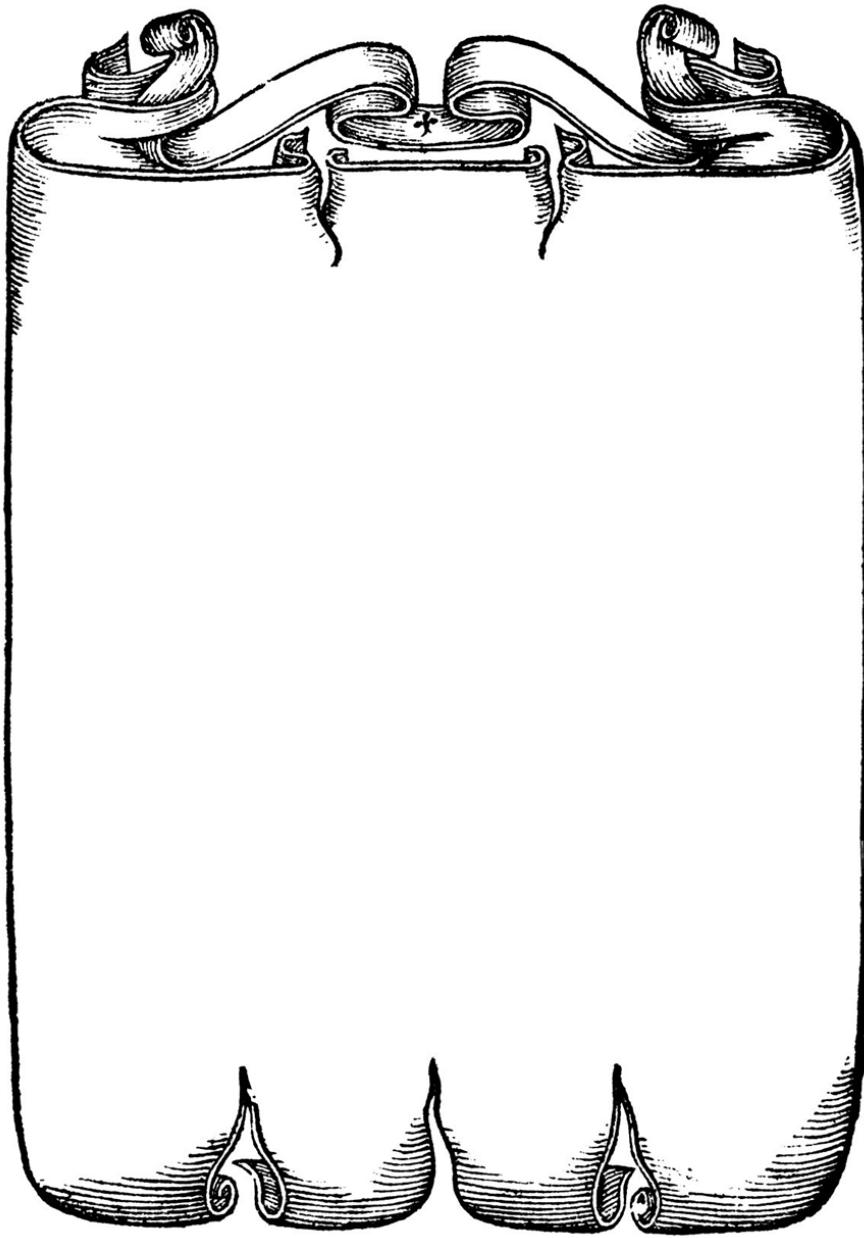
*... kneel and carefully tighten the jesus nut, but note:  
improper fitting may fatally void warranty ...*

Reborn as carbon composite, I discover built-in lingering doubts,  
has something (maybe still in the flat-pack?) somehow been left out?

*Steve Smart*

# EPILOGUE

*Now it's your turn to play the creator*



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# The Wyvern Poets

Formed in April 2017 and based in Dundee, Wyvern poets meet on a monthly basis to share ideas, try out new poems and support one another with problems and revisions. There is an emphasis on pursuing writing and strong encouragement to publish. To this end, noteworthy poets who live in and around Dundee are welcomed on a regular basis to read their poems and discuss their techniques, working habits and approaches to publication.

The group was founded by Roy Canning and takes its name from a suggestion by Roddie McKenzie that the wyvern has particular relevance to Dundee, being a component on a Dundee Seal of 1900 and appearing in different forms throughout the city.

While members of the group share a passion for having fun with words and experimenting with verse forms, perspectives, tone, imagery and the music of lines, their interests are diverse and their writing styles individual. Among many other themes, those of loss and change, landscape and land, history, memory, emerging technologies and urban life recur across the poets' work, encompassing the spiritual, the personal, the social and the political aspects of life. Poems are written in both Scots and English, and, whether autobiographical or otherworldly, are at times purposefully humorous or meditative or edgy or provocative.

Extremely interested in all things local, Wyverns are keen to and have collaborated with city institutions on different writing projects: Echo at Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre, poetry publication with Friends of Dundee Law, Mary Shelley and Frankenstein project with University of Dundee - and the combined arts project with Dundee Botanic Gardens.

Group members' poems appear in *New Writing Scotland*, *Lallans*, *Gutter*, *Dundee Writes*, *North-words* and *Seagate 111*, as well as on numerous online sites based outside Scotland.

Contact details:

[wyvernpoets@gmail.com](mailto:wyvernpoets@gmail.com)

<https://wyvernpoets.wixsite.com/dundee>



## Biographies

**Fran Baillie** has been published in *Gutter*, *Poetic Republic*, *Sentinel*, *Lallans*, *Shooter*, *Seagate III* and other anthologies and magazines. Her recent pamphlet *Mixer-Maxter* was published in the latter part of 2017.

**Gavin Cameron** was born in Dundee in 1983. His poetry has been featured in several Scottish anthologies, most recently *Poets~Republic*. He also runs the writers' open-mic night Hotchpotch.

**Roy Canning** lives in Broughty Ferry, Dundee. He has published a number of poems in anthologies and taken part in local poetry events. His main interest is writing about urban life.

**Bet McCallum** lives in Broughty Ferry and London. She has co-authored three books on primary education. Her short stories, brief memoirs and poems have appeared in *New Writing Dundee*, *Gutter*, *Dundee Writes* and *Seagate III*.

**Roddie McKenzie** lives in Dundee and has published with the Nethergate Writers since 2006. His poetry and short stories have appeared in *Cairn*, *Lallans*, *Dundee Writes*, *Seagate III*, *New Writing Scotland*, and with the Scottish Book Trust.

**Anita Petrie** lives in Broughty Ferry. Since retiring, she has become interested in writing poetry. She likes to see the world differently through the lens of poetry and literature.

**Ann Prescott** comes from the Wirral, Cheshire. She has had short stories published by Nethergate Writers, and writes poems for fun.

**George Robertson** resides in Dundee. He is a published novelist and poet. He loves writing humorous verse under the theme of Nursery Nuances. He writes in Scots and English and recently self-published his first collection.

**Steve Smart** is a poet and artist living in Angus. His poems have been published in several online journals and in print. Memory, technology, and human perspectives on the environment are all themes he is interested in.

# Coming Soon!

## *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: The Dundee Edition*

